532 every issue.

The most representative and most publicized new comic strip is The Letter with a Chicken Feather,[22] which uses 243 pictures to "give Chinese children a patriotic education." The story concerns a young boy who, after receiving a Communist education, successfully fulfilled the "heroic" task of delivering an important message to anti-Japanese guerrilla force. It is claimed that more than 58,000 copies of The Letter with a Chicken Feather have been sold.

E. Dance

535 China as a whole does not have any distinctive form of dancing, although yang-ko is sometimes so considered. Combining singing and dancing, it is derived from the song pattern of peasants who sing in groups in an antiphonal manner while working in the rice-fields. The dance steps follow a simple pattern -- two steps forward and one step backward -- resembling the movement of the peasants as they work in the fields. In village festivals, the yang-ko is sometimes performed, but it became truly popular only after the reform of literature and art in 1942, when the Communist used the dance to

22. It was a traditional practice to include a chicken feather with an urgent message, to signify the letter's importance and the need for safekeeping.

535 propagate new ideas in Shensi and, later, in North China. It was introduced to other parts of China in time to greet the advancing People's Liberation Army. The opera The White-haired Girl was based on singing and dancing forms of the yang-ko; and at the first stage of land reform this opera was utilized by the Communist cadres in many different parts of China to stir up class hatred in villages. The vogue of the yang-ko in East China now seems to be over, because the sophisticated cadres seem to prefer the new operas and the Western social dance to yang-ko singing and dancing.

The Chinese Communists have always fostered any art form that would assist their revolution. In 1950, Hsien Hsing-hai's Production Cantata (Sheng-ch'an Ta Ho-ch'ang) was transformed into an operatic spectacle. The new song-and-dance version is divided into four parts celebrating spring cultivation, seeding, harvest, and prosperity respectively, to portray the rural people's enthusiasm for production and their "prosperity" as the result of the Communist "liberation."[23]

The Central Dance Corps at Peking, sponsored by the government, recently gave a

23. People's Pictorial, August 1950.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF15 East China
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535 "Lion Dance". It was an adaptation of a traditional festival dance performed in North China during the lunar New Year season.[24] Another dance, "Tea and Butterflies," has also been widely publicized; it shows maidens gathering tea leaves in Western Fukien.[25] The purpose of these dances is "to beautify the working spirit" and to set a pattern to be developed by dance corps elsewhere in China.

The Cultural Work Corps (Wen-kung T'uan) of the Central Institute of Nationalities at Peking has been visiting the minority communities in Southwest China and has adapted some of the dances of the minority peoples for performance in Peking, in other Chinese cities, and abroad. Among those performed are a flute dance (a courtship dance) and a wedding dance of the Miao people; "Happy Sun" (a tap dance) and "Good Harvest" (a traditional dance around the family cooking stove) of the Tibetans in Southwest China; "Please Stay, You Guests from Afar" of the Yi people; and the "Peacock Dance" of the Tai (Thai) people.[26]

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24. Ibid., March 1954.
25. Ibid., April 1954.
26. Ibid., July 1954.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF15 East China
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535 The Central Experimental Opera
177 Institute at Peking has also been giving instruction in ballet, and there are many aspiring ballerinas. Interest in ballet is unprecedented in China and is clearly influenced by the popularity of ballet in Russia.[27]

536 Activities associated with dancing are
658 organized and directed by the government. There is the All-China Association of Dancers, a subdivision of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Workers,[28] with headquarters in Peking. Tai Ai-lien, a well-known professional dancer, heads the association. She has dedicated herself to the incorporation of folk life, especially that of the minority peoples, into her dances. Her training, however, is Western.

F. Music

533 Appreciation of Western classical music has been revived in accordance with the principle of "accepting the culture of the world." A municipal symphony orchestra in Peking performs Beethoven as well as Tschaikowsky and is intended to set an example for musical

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27. Ibid., May 1954.

38. The All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles was changed to the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Workers in September 1953.